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Message Text

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PAGE 01 NASSAU 01522 241522Z

44
ACTION PPT-01

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 SCA-01 L-03 CIAE-00 DODE-00

INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 CAB-02

COME-00 DOTE-00 EB-07 CIEP-01 FAA-00 /039 W
---------- 099631
R 232115Z SEP 76
FM AMEMBASSY NASSAU
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8677
INFO INS WASH DC

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: CPAS BF
SUBJ: PROOF OF CITIZENSHIP REQUIREMENTS FOR U.S. VISITORS
TO BAHAMAS

1. SOMETIME DURING MID-SUMMER OF LAST YEAR BAHAMIAN
IMMIGRATION DEPARTMENT BEGAN STRICTLY ENFORCING REGULATIONS
CONCERNING PROOF OF U.S. CITIZENSHIP FOR VISITING AMERICAN
TOURISTS. AMERICAN VISITORS WERE REQUIRED TO PRODUCE
IN LIEU OF PASSPORT, A BIRTH CERTIFICATE, VOTER REGISTRATION
CARD, OR NATURALIZATION CERTIFICATE BEFORE BEING ALLOWED
TO ENTER THE BAHAMAS. GIVEN FACT THAT ONLY MINIMAL
NUMBER OF U.S. CITIZENS NORMALLY CARRY SUCH DOCUMENTATION,
RESULTS OF THAT POLICY WERE RISING NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS
TO EMBASSY FROM POTENTIAL AMERICAN TOURISTS WHO WERE BEING
TURNED DOWN BY AIR CARRIERS IN MIAMI AND OTHER U.S.
PORTS OF EMBARKATION, AS WELL AS BY TOURISTS WHO SUCCEEDED
IN ENTRY ONLY AFTER LONG AND IN SOME CASES UNREASONABLE
QUESTIONING AND HARRASSMENT BY BAHAMIAN IMMIGRATION OFFICIALS.
ANOTHER RESULT WAS THE LOSS FOR THE BAHAMAS -- REAL AND POTENTIAL--
OF AMERICAN TOURISTS PARTICULARLY THOSE WHO WHILE VACATIONING
IN FLORIDA MIGHT DECIDE ON IMPULSE TO SPEND SEVERAL
DAYS OR A WEEKEND VISITING BAHAMAS. BOTH EMBASSY AND
MINISTRY OF TOURISM THEREFORE HAD AN INTEREST IN SEEING MATTER
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PAGE 02 NASSAU 01522 241522Z

CLARIFIED -- THE EMBASSY SO THAT IT COULD ALERT POTENTIAL

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TOURISTS AND THE MINISTRY TO INSURE THAT TOURISM WAS NOT
REDUCED.

2. PROBLEM WAS DISCUSSED INFORMALLY WITH MINEXTAFF WHICH
ENCOURAGED EMBASSY TO SEEK A "CLARIFICATION" FROM THE
MINISTRIES OF HOME AFFAIRS (WHICH INCLUDES IMMIGRATION)
AND TOURISM. THE EMBASSY SENT A LETTER TO EXTAFF OUTLINING
THE PROBLEM, AND MENTIONING THE POSSIBILITY OF REQUESTING
THE DEPARTMENT TO ISSUE A NOTICE SAYING IN EFFECT THAT
AMERICAN TOURISTS COMING TO BAHAMAS SHOULD BRING PASSPORTS.
EXTAFF THEN ARRANGED A MEETING WITH REPRESENTATIVES FROM
THESE MINISTRIES AND EMBASSY. AT MEETING, HOME AFFAIRS
REQUESTED EMBASSY TO GIVE BLANKET COMMITMENT THAT U.S.
WOULD PERMIT RE-ENTRY OF ALL VISITORS ARRIVING IN THE
BAHAMAS FROM U.S. PORTS OF EMBARKATION IN EVENT THAT
GCOB CHOSE TO DEPORT THEM. WHEN IT WAS EXPLAINED THAT THIS
WAS IMPOSSIBLE, HOME AFFAIRS RELUCTANTLY YIELDED TO TOURISM
PRESSURES AND AGREED TO A LAX ENFORCEMENT POLICY RE U.S.
CITIZEN IDENTIFICATION.

3. THAT POLICY, WHICH HAS BEEN IN EFFECT FOR SOME WEEKS,
WAS OFFICIALLY ENUNCIATED BY THE BAHAMIAN GOVERNMENT IN
THE FOLLOWING PRESS RELEASE ISSUED SEPTEMBER 22:
QUOTE BAHAMAS CLARIFIES ENTRY REGULATIONS FOR VISITORS
FROM U.S. PORTS
  THE BAHAMAS, SEPTEMBER 00---------- THE MINISTRIES
OF TOURISM AND HOME AFFAIRS TODAY CLARIFIED REGULATIONS CONCERNING
PROOF OF CITIZENSHIP REQUIRED OF VISITORS ENTERING THE BAHAMAS FROM
THE UNITED STATES.
  ALTHOUGH PASSPORTS ARE NOT REQUIRED, BAHAMIAN LAW
REQUIRES PROOF OF U.S. CITIZENSHIP SUCH AS A BIRTH CERTIFICATE,
VOTER REGISTRATION CARD, NATURALIZATION CERTIFICATES OR PASSPORT.
LACK OF SUCH DOCUMENTATION IN THE PAST HAS RESULTED IN SOME PERSONS
BEING REFUSED ENTRY INTO THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS.
  TO PREVENT SUCH INCONVENIENCE TO BONAFIDE VISITORS
THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS HAS ADVISED IMMIGRATION OFFICERS AT
ALL PORTS OF ENTRY IN THE BAHAMAS "TO EXERCISE THEIR DISCRETION IN
FAVOUR OF THE VISITOR" WHO IS A CITIZEN OF THE U.S. UPON
PRESENTATION OF A DRIVER'S LICENCE OR SOCIAL SECURITY CARD AND WHO
ALSO DECLARES THAT HE OR SHE IS A CITIZEN OF THE UNITED STATES.
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THE VISITOR WILL BE ADMITTED UNLESS THE IMMIGRATION OFFICER HAS
REASON TO DOUBT THE CITIZENSHIP CLAIM.
  A MINISTRY OF TOURISM SPOKESMAN SAID THAT
INFORMATION CONCERNING THE CLARIFIED ENTRY REGULATION IS BEING
WIDELY CIRCULATED TO THE PRESS, BAHAMAS TOURIST OFFICES,
THOUSANDS OF TRAVEL AGENTS AND TO THE PRINCIPAL AIRLINES AND
CRUISEHIP LINES SERVING THE BAHAMAS. UNQUOTE
WEISS

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